

**Introduction:** Almost all ‘boomers’ are familiar with First Corinthians chapter thirteen. It has been called the ‘Love Chapter’. It was read at many of the weddings of our friends; and, quite often when our parents or parents of our cousins or friends would renew their vows on a milestone wedding anniversary. But, in this chapter, who is the lover with such incredible love; and, who is the one being loved? Is this chapter only about love in marriage? \*\*\* The three stages of understanding this chapter that I went through in my early years as a Christian getting to know God and His Word may make sense to some of you. Here they are. \*\*\* First, I was yearning for someone to love me in this way. My mother did not count! Many mothers love their sons. My friends and I used to joke about a contract mothers signed at the birth of their sons to love them no matter what they did or who they became. \*\*\* Second, I decided this yearning was a waste of time and I needed to get over myself! One morning after I read this chapter I prayed: God, it doesn’t matter if people don’t love me. Please help me to love people in this way. I think that would please You. After that, I began to experience some freedom about love. \*\*\* Third, at the start of the seventh year of my relationship with God, I read how Jonathan Edwards understood this chapter. He said it describes God’s LOVE for people. ONLY God can love this way; and, in His love for sinners, He desires for them to repent and seek forgiveness IN Jesus. When they do this, He forgives them and they begin to experience and enjoy His incredible LOVE through their relationship with Him. \*\*\* So, let us all be grateful to God for His LOVE for His Church. And may His LOVE motivate the Church to love all their neighbors with His LOVE: the first fruit of The Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). \*\*\* Jesus’ teaching about the two greatest commandments to wholly love God, and to love our neighbor, supports the mature understanding of the ‘Love Chapter’. \*\*\* Let’s now go deeper into our passages so we may better understand God’s LOVE.

**I. Strong faith and generosity without love are worth nothing; love has fifteen active qualities that lead to patient endurance of difficulties. (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)**

**A. Words, prophetic faith and generosity without sacrificial love are worth nothing. (Verses 1-3)**

1. Even if I may be speaking with tongues of men and of angels; but love not I may be having, I have become brass being noisy or cymbal clanging. (Verse 1)

**Speaking:** Paul is supposing that he is fluent in many languages of earth and heaven.

**Noisy:** But, not having sacrificial love would make him and his words as offensive as low grade metal being randomly and forcefully struck.

2. Even if I may be having prophecy and I may be having understanding of all mysteries, and all knowledge, and even if I may be having faith to remove mountains; but love not I may be having, nothing I am being. (Verse 2)

**Understand mysteries:** Now Paul is supposing that he has been given words directly from God to know God and to understand more of His ways than most people.

**Powerful faith:** On top of that, he supposes God has given him the powerful ‘mustard seed’ faith Jesus described (Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6).

**Nothing:** But, not having sacrificial love would negate the very essence of his being.

3. And, I may give away food, all my possessions, and even if I may give my body that I may proudly boast (of my sacrificial generosity); but love not I may be having, I am not being profited. (Verse 3)

**Three-fold giving:** Now Paul is supposing that he gives away food to keep people alive, and he gives away all his earthly possessions (to have treasure in heaven, Matthew 6:19-21), and he even sacrifices his body – but with mixed motives.

**Nothing profited:** But, for the third time, not having sacrificial love would result in his getting no credit from God – he is not ‘profited’.

**B. Sacrificial love has fifteen active qualities: seven are fully positive, and eight are the absence of negative qualities – especially being provoked; first and last, love patiently endures difficulties. (Verses 4-7)**

1. (Sacrificial) love is being patient in difficulty and being kind. (Verses 4a-b)

**Patient and kind:** God’s LOVE patiently endures all the sins people commit against Him. Peter used the same word to say God wants all people to repent (2 Peter 3:9). Paul used the noun of ‘being kind’ in saying God’s kindness leads to repentance (Romans 2:4).

2. (Sacrificial) love is not being jealous, (sacrificial) love is not bragging conceitedly, not is being arrogant. (Verses 4c-5a)

**Not proud:** In no way does God’s LOVE make Him proud concerning people He made in His image.

Rather, He humbled himself to die on a Cross for people (Philippians 2:6-7).

3. Not is behaving immorally, not is seeking her own things, not is being made irritable, not is thinking evil. (Verses 5b-d)

**Not self-centered:** Self-centered people rarely have good morality, only care about their stuff, get angry when people get in their way, and believe the end justifies the means. God is NOT like that!

4. Not is rejoicing in injustice, but is rejoicing in The Truth. (Verse 6)

**Joy in truth over wrong:** The two actions are opposites. Taken together, they say in His LOVE, God rejoices over both Truth and Justice!

5. All things (sacrificial love) is keeping silently confidential, all things is believing, all things is hoping, all things is enduring. (Verse 7)

**Faith and hope:** God’s LOVE is full of faith and hope in every circumstance.

**Silent endurance:** And God’s LOVE silently endures even the worst of sinners acting in ignorance and unbelief to show His patient endurance to save sinners to life (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

**II. For now people’s best efforts are only partial and dim; but, when The Perfect comes all will truly know: love is the greatest; and, Jesus said the first commandment is to love God with the whole being. (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Mark 12:28-31)**

**A. Now, even what is best is only partial and dim – immature; but, when The Perfect may come, we will truly know – face-to-face; and, love is the greatest. (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)**

1. But (sacrificial) love not ever is failing. (Verse 8a)

**Bottom line:** Sacrificial love always uplifts, just as God’s LOVE for humanity in Jesus always uplifts.

**The most God-like character quality is Love**

**Application:** Let us all be encouraged that God’s LOVE for us IN Jesus will never fail but always uplift!

2. But, whether prophecies, they will be done away; whether tongues, they will cease; whether knowledge, it will be done away. (*Verses 8b-d*)  
**Three gifts will cease:** Prophecy, speaking in unknown languages, and special knowledge given by God (gifts from The Holy Spirit for the Church age) will all someday come to an end.
3. Because from of part we are knowing, and from of part we are prophesying; but, when it may have come, The Perfect, the from of part will be done away. (*Verses 9-10*)  
**Partial knowing and prophecy:** Paul is saying that in the Church age, both special knowledge and prophecy are only partially effective in giving a full understanding of who God IS and all He does.  
**The Perfect completes:** Jesus Christ is THE Perfect One. He will come again. When He does come for His Church, the partial gifting of His people will no longer be partial, and their love will be made perfect as God's LOVE is perfect.

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4. When I was being a child, I was speaking as a child, I was thinking as a child, I was considering as a child; when I had become a man I had done away (with) the things of a child. (*Verse 11*)  
**Children become adults:** Taking this metaphorically, as children become adults, all who follow Jesus by faith will be made like Him when He returns, no longer partial in either gifts or character. They will even be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:13-16; 1 John 3:1-3).

**Application:** Let us always be excited that when Jesus returns, His perfect LOVE for us will make us like Him, we will be whole even as He is holy.

5. Where we are seeing now through a metal mirror in dim obscurity, but then face-to-face; now I am knowing by experience from of part, but then I will truly know even as also I have been truly known. (*Verse 12*)

**Now – dimness:** At this time what we know of Jesus by experience is a poor reflection of all He IS!

**Then – face-to-face, truly knowing:** When we finally see Him face-to-face we will truly (fully) know Him, even as now He truly (fully) knows us! This is a blessed hope (Titus 2:11-14).

6. But now it is remaining: faith, hope, (sacrificial) love, these three; but, greatest of these (is) (sacrificial) love. (*Verse 13*)  
**Now – three virtues:** Until Jesus returns, all believers have three virtues given by The Holy Spirit: faith, hope, and (sacrificial) love.

**Love greatest:** When Jesus returns there will be no need for faith and hope because we will all see Him and fully know Him. But God's LOVE is eternal and steadfast. And, having become like Jesus our love will be perfected to be like God's eternal and steadfast LOVE.

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- B. Jesus said the first commandment is to love The One God of Israel with the whole person; and, also the neighbor as myself. (*Mark 12:28-31*)

1. And having come, one of the scribes, having heard them reasoning together, and having perceived that well (Jesus) had answered them, he asked Him: Which is being first commandment of all? (*Verse 28*)

**Scribe and Jesus:** This scribe, an expert in the Torah and the Prophets, had been impressed by how Jesus answered the Sadducees when they questioned Him concerning the resurrection of the dead (verses 18-27).

**First commandment:** So he asks Jesus what was the first commandment of all the commandments given through Moses.

2. Jesus answered, "First is being, "Hear Israel: Lord, our God, Lord One is being; and, thou will love the God of thee from the whole heart of thee, and from the whole soul of thee, and from the whole mind of thee, and from the whole strength of thee" ... (*Verses 29-30*)

**Shema:** Jesus quotes the most important command of the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), beginning with the Hebrew word 'shema' – hear! The One God is to be loved by His one people with their whole being. All the pronouns are singular because the people of Israel are one family descended from the patriarch Jacob-Israel. And, they are to obey The One God with unified obedience. The same principle applies to the one Church of Jesus.

**Application:** So, we must begin to think of ourselves as being united together as One Body IN Jesus.

**Why love:** Psychologists and philosophers have observed that people begin to take on the qualities of a person whom they love with a deep and committed love. God, as the Creator of people, designed us this way, and therefore commands us to love Him so we can become like Him.

*We become who we love*

3. ... second this, "Thou will love the neighbor of thee as thyself"; greater of these (two), other commandment not is being'. (*Verse 31*)

**Love neighbor:** Christians experience a reconciled relationship with God. A result of this is enjoying His LOVE, the greatest feeling people can have. And, because the fruit of The Holy Spirit is The LOVE of the 'Love Chapter', Christians want to do all they can do so their neighbors can know God and enjoy His LOVE as they themselves know God and enjoy His LOVE. This is because **the most God-like character quality is Love**.

**Application:** So, we must always experience God's LOVE enjoyed through being reconciled to Him IN Jesus; and, we must desire our neighbors to have the same joy of God's LOVE we have.

**Conclusion:** Strong faith and generosity without love are worth nothing. Love has fifteen active qualities that lead to patient endurance of difficulties. But, for now, the best efforts of people are only partial and dim. When The Perfect (Jesus) comes (again), people will fully know: Love is the greatest. Jesus Himself said the first commandment is to love The One God with the whole being, which leads to love of neighbor.

**The most God-like character quality is Love**